

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING ON
AMENDMENT OF EQB SPECIAL RULES FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW OF POWER PLANTS AND
HIGH VOLTAGE TRANSMISSION LINES
AT THE CERTIFICATE OF NEED STAGE
BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**

PLEASE BE ADVISED that the Environmental Quality Board staff will hold a public meeting on Wednesday, August 28, 2002, in Room 302 of the Centennial Building in St. Paul. The meeting will start at 1:00 and end by 4:00. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss with interested persons the amendment of the EQB Special Rules for Certain Large Energy Facilities and High Voltage Transmission Lines found in Minnesota Rules parts 4410.7000 to 4410.7500. A large power plant is a power plant with a capacity of 50 megawatts or more and a high voltage transmission line is one with a capacity of 100 kilovolts or more.

The Environmental Quality Board staff has prepared a draft of possible amendments to the Special Rules for environmental review of large power plants and high voltage transmission lines. The draft language is available on the EQB Web page. A brief explanation of the language can be found at the end of the draft language. This draft language is a suggestion from EQB staff only; it has not been reviewed by the EQB Board and it will likely be revised before the Board is asked to initiate a rulemaking proceeding. At the public meeting the staff will explain the draft language. The public is invited to ask questions and to register comments and suggestions for amendment of the rules.

The three main issues to be discussed at the meeting are what kind of environmental document should be prepared, who should prepare it, and what process should be followed in preparing the document. The draft language prepared by the EQB staff provides that the environmental document to be prepared is an environmental assessment. An environmental assessment is defined in the draft language as a document that describes the human and environmental impacts of a proposed project and alternatives and methods to mitigate adverse impacts. It is similar to the document the Power Plant Siting Act requires for certain projects at the siting and routing stage before the EQB, but it is more general because no site specific or route specific impacts are identified. Over time, much of the information in an environmental assessment prepared at the certificate of need stage will come from earlier assessments since the general impacts of a certain type power plant or certain size transmission line remain the same. A second round of environmental review will occur at the EQB when a permit application for a specific site or route is submitted.

The draft language provides that the EQB would be the agency to prepare the environmental assessment at the certificate of need stage, but one idea under consideration is that the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency would prepare the environmental assessment on power plants and the EQB would prepare the document on transmission lines. Your comments and ideas on what agency should prepare the

environmental assessment are solicited. In any event, various state agencies may be asked to assist in preparation of an environmental assessment depending on the impact being evaluated.

The process established in the draft rules creates an opportunity at the start of the process for the public to suggest impacts and alternatives to be evaluated in the environmental assessment. The agency preparing the document would determine what alternatives to include and what impacts to evaluate. Once the environmental assessment was completed, the document would be delivered to the Public Utilities Commission for inclusion in the administrative record created during the contested case hearing held on the project. The hearing would not commence until the environmental assessment was available. The preparer of the document would be available at the hearing to respond to questions. Interested persons, including the applicant, could comment on the information in the environmental assessment at the hearing and any person could respond to comments of others. There would be no revision of the environmental assessment other than through the introduction of evidence at the hearing, unless the PUC directed the EQB to supplement the document. The reason for this is because the Public Utilities Commission is required by statute to make a decision on a certificate of need application within six months from the day a complete application is accepted and there is not enough time to revise the document.

Notice of this public meeting is being sent by e-mail to persons who have asked to be advised of the EQB's progress in revising its rules. In addition, notice is being sent to those persons on the Public Utilities Commission advisory committee working on draft rules for the new transmission planning process. Notice is also being sent to the Technical Representatives for each Board member. Any person who would like to attend is welcome to do so.

Questions may be directed to Alan Mitchell, Manager, Power Plant Siting, EQB, at (6510) 296-3714 or e-mail at Alan.Mitchell@state.mn.us

Dated: August 12, 2002